

THE HERON'S PLUME.

Mary Martha (Beith)
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ETC. ETC.

THE
HERON'S PLUME.

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THE HERON'S PLUME.

ABOUT thirty years ago there lived in the city of London a very rich merchant of the name of Collinton. The wife of this gentleman was a very fine lady, and one whose only pleasure was in show and grandeur.

Mr. Collinton's father never had more than two children, himself and a brother some years younger.

This brother, whose name was James, was a hot-headed, unruly boy; he had been much spoiled by his mother, and when she died, he ran away to sea. It was well known in what ship he had sailed, and it was also known that she had gone to the bottom in a storm, near the Cape of Good Hope, and

everybody supposed that he had gone down with her.

Mr. Collinton sometimes, when talking of his younger days, used to say, "My poor brother James was living then;" but he never said anything more about him, and was not sorry still to keep the five thousand pounds which his father had left for this his younger son, should he ever turn up again.

Mr. and Mrs. Collinton had only two children. To these children their mamma gave as fine names as she could think of. The boy was called Adolphus, and the girl Matilda; and Master Adolphus and Miss Matilda were brought up at the greatest expense; because their parents were resolved that they should both be perfect patterns of elegance and fashion.

From the time when Mr. Collinton married till Matilda was become a tall girl, everything went on to the satisfaction of the family, and more was added every year to the stock; but just when her papa and

mamma were talking of buying a house and lands in the country, and living in style, an event took place which put the merchant very much out of his way.

A letter came from his brother James, that very brother whom Mr. Collinton had thought to be dead so many years. This letter told of escapes and troubles without number. The brother had been captured by the enemies of his country, and shut up in prison for several years. He had escaped, begged his bread, and worked as a common sailor; had made various attempts to get back to England, and had always been disappointed. At length he had met with a very lovely young person, of English parentage, in the West Indies. He had married her, and they had lived most happily on her small independent fortune, till within the few last months, when he had been deprived of her by death. He spoke with deep regret of his loss; but said he could only find comfort by returning to his old

profession the sea ; and he added, that as soon as he could settle his affairs where he was, he should, he thought, engage as a partner in some trading vessel, and endeavour thus to improve his fortune.

All this was bad enough to Mr. Collinton, who felt that he should have to refund poor James's fortune. But what had gone before was not the worst ; the letter went on to say, that there were two children. The father called them dear and pretty children. A boy of thirteen, and a girl of eleven, just left motherless, and without means of education—and these would be, he said, on their way to England before the letter could reach their uncle. They would be sent under the charge of the little girl's god-mother, Mrs. Storer, who intended to reside in town, and would, on their arrival, be forwarded immediately to their uncle.

This letter was put into Mr. Collinton's hands by a friend, who was just come from the West Indies,—one who had seen Mr.

James Collinton himself, and had known him as a boy ; there could, therefore, be no mistake.

Immediately on receiving this letter, Mr. Collinton hastened to his wife to tell her the change.

They now consulted what was to be done. They were both very angry, though neither of them said to the other how vexed they were to hear that a man was alive whom they had thought dead many years ; but Mrs. Collinton especially murmured aloud at the children being sent to them ; and indeed said so much, that her husband, after a little while, seemed to be hurt with her violence, and requested that the subject might be dropped ; and so it was between the lady and her husband, though she continued to fret without ceasing for many days, and she was continually saying to Miss Philimot, her daughter's governess, that she hoped she would take care that there was no intimacy between Matilda and her cousin, adding,

that she herself should use measures to prevent Adolphus from forming a friendship with the boy,—such children as those being of course very unfit to associate with elegant young people like her own.

Mrs. Collinton arranged that the children should be sent to school soon after they arrived. She had hardly chosen the schools in which she intended them to be placed, when the little people came.

They were kept only three days at that time at their uncle's.

The names of these children were Edward and Annabella; and, as the father had said, they were particularly handsome, although pale from the effect of the hot climate whence they had come. Edward was rough and spirited, and could only be led by kindness. It was not so easily to be seen what Annabella was; for she did little else than weep at the idea of being parted from her brother, during the few days in which she remained at her uncle's.

And now we must pass over two years from the time the children came from the West Indies. Mr. Collinton had made up what his lady accounted a loss of five thousand pounds, and interest upon it, and had added as much again to his money; and now he and Mrs. Collinton began to talk in earnest of a country-house. At length they heard of one in Devonshire, which they thought would suit them well; and early in the spring of the year in which Matilda was fourteen, Mr. Collinton came from town to see the place and make the purchase.

Heron Hall, as it was called, was an old stone house, though wanting only a little brushing up to make it the handsomest dwelling in the neighbourhood. It stood in a park, very finely wooded, and at some small distance from the house was a superb lake. Parts of the borders of this lake were wide and open, on other sides it was shaded by groves of trees, which came down to the

water's edge ; but that which made one of the greatest beauties of the place was, that at the end of the lake most remote from the house, was an island. Of course the island was small ; but it could boast of many fine old trees, as well as various shrubs and evergreens, which had been planted there to look well in the winter season.

For many years beyond the memory of any man then living, this island had been a place where those birds called herons had been accustomed to come at the breeding season, to make their nests at the top of the highest trees. When Mr. Collinton bought the place, he was told the herons used formerly to meet there every year in large numbers ; but that of late fewer had come ; and the reason given was, that since the Hall had not been occupied, and there had been fewer persons on the premises, the birds had been disturbed, either by wanton persons, or by persons who wished to snare them for their beautiful crests and plumes.

Mr. Collinton had been much pleased at the idea of having a heronry on his estate. He thought it sounded grand, and asked if it were only at the breeding season that the birds were seen about the island ?

The old game-keeper, who was telling the history of the heronry to the new master, said that he had observed two of them about fishing in the lake during the whole of the last winter, and one he should know perfectly again anywhere ; because he had more white about him than any one of the kind he had ever seen.

Mr. Collinton gave strict orders to the game-keeper to guard the heronry, adding, that it would be a great pleasure to him to see it as prosperous as it was in the good old times.

There was no time lost after Heron Hall was bought, in putting it into proper order. All the best furniture, the paper, and the curtains, were sent down from London ; and in a few months it was ready for the family.

Nothing, in the meanwhile, had been heard of Captain James Collinton, for so his brother now called him ; and his poor children began almost to fear that he was dead.

When they were preparing to leave London, Mr. Collinton proposed, that as Heron Hall was so large, and Matilda would be parted from her young friends in London, Annabella should be taken from school and kept with her cousin, at least as long as she could make herself agreeable to her and to Miss Philimot : and when Adolphus heard of this, he thought that he should much like to show the grandeur of his papa's new house to Edward. Thus it was settled that they should all come down together to Heron Hall. Mrs. Collinton, Miss Philimot, Matilda, and Annabella travelled in the coach ; and when they came within a few miles of the Hall, they all began to look anxiously about them.

They were still about three or four miles distant when they came to a small town,

in which were several handsome houses, a large town hall, and some respectable shops; but what pleased Mrs. Collinton still more, was a very elegant residence, situated in a beautiful garden very near the road side, and scarcely a mile from the park gates. Whilst she was still eagerly looking at it, Mr. Collinton, who was on horseback, rode up to tell her, that the place before her was the residence of a widow lady of high rank, namely, the Lady Jane Barclay; that she was the life and soul of the neighbourhood; and had said, as he had heard, that she should be the first person to visit the new family.

Mrs. Collinton was very much pleased at the thought of having a visit from such a lady; but she was still better pleased when she saw the grand house and beautiful place which she was to inhabit.

As they rode through the park to the house, Matilda tried to hide her delight by seeming quite indifferent to everything; but Annabella was filled with joy at the thoughts

of the liberty she should have in running about these wide grounds.

The boys, too, who were on horseback, and therefore could see the place better than those in the coach, were both much pleased. Adolphus thought most of the grandeur of the woods and of the island in the lake, which was the resort of the herons; but Edward was most delighted with a large pleasure-boat which lay upon the quiet waters, and which had a sail which could be easily unfurled on occasion. Edward was in his heart almost a sailor, like what his papa had been.

My young reader shall not be much troubled with many accounts of what Mrs. Collinton thought and felt when she found herself mistress of such a place as Heron Hall, with its noble house, its park, its gardens, its lake, and its heronry. It may please him better to hear how the children got on.

When Matilda and Annabella had followed Mr. and Mrs. Collinton through all the grand

rooms, they asked to see the apartments which were for them and Miss Philimot, and they were shown into a suite of rooms on the first floor, which looked out over the lake to the park, having the island and tall trees of the heronry almost in a line with the windows. These rooms consisted, first, of a large apartment, which might serve for a study, a work-room, or a play-room. It was neatly furnished. There was a room on each side of this ; one being only a closet, in which was a little bed for Annabella ; the other being very large, and furnished with great taste. This last was for Matilda and Miss Philimot.

The governess expressed great satisfaction with everything, and Annabella thought her little room the most delightful place in the whole world ; but Matilda affected not to care for anything, and when she condescended to speak at all, it was always to find fault, and to say that she wished things had been differently managed.

Annabella was not only naturally gentle and quiet, but she was more than naturally good-humoured, as will be seen by and by. She had, until she was near eleven years of age, been almost constantly with one of the best and most pious of mothers. She knew very well, because she had been taught by God, that no child can change the heart of another ; and she also knew that it was not her place to find fault with her elders. She therefore left Miss Matilda to murmur and mutter as she pleased, and set herself to unpack and arrange her few articles in the drawers and shelves in her delightful little closet, where a prospect of the park from the window reminded her of some view of this kind which she remembered in Barbadoes.

For some time Annabella heard no other sound in the outer-room than a sort of languid muttering proceeding from Matilda, and a fawning whine which came from Miss Philimot, who was trying in vain to sooth

her pupil into good humour, when suddenly there was a bang, as of a door slammed open, which made her start, and then a loud burst of voices. She knew these voices to be those of Adolphus and Edward. "Well, Miss Matilda," were the first words which she heard, "what sort of a place have you got here?"

This inquiry was made by Adolphus, and it was answered by Edward before Matilda could so far master her affectation as to bring out a single word.

"A very good berth, a capital berth," said the young sailor; "and it must be confessed that you have made a good exchange of this fine light room for your dusky cabin in Finsbury Square, Miss Collinton."

"Dusky cabin!" repeated Matilda, "I am sure that my apartments in town were quite as handsome as these; as lofty and as light, and perhaps better furnished. I do not think that papa, when he selected these rooms for me, acted with his usual good

taste ; for I should much have preferred the other side of the house, where there are a darling suite of chambers which face the grand approach."

"And from which you could have seen all the fine folks steering up to the house, Miss Matilda," said Edward ; "what a pity that you should have nothing to look at but green trees and water !"

"Really, Edward," said Matilda, "I wish when you left the ship which brought you over from your own country, that you had left your loud voice and some of your inelegant expressions behind you."

"I am sorry I do not please you, cousin," said Edward carelessly, and he began to step along the room, as if measuring its length, turning round at the end, and calling out, "twenty-four by twenty. I say, Adolphus, what did the gardener say was the size of the new boat on the lake?"

"Really, Edward," replied Adolphus, "you are fit only to do as your father did ; and I

should not wonder if that was the end of you after all."

"What do you mean?" asked Edward hotly; "what did my father do, and what is the end which you are talking of?"

"Why," replied Adolphus, "that I should not wonder if you were to run off to sea and get drowned."

No one can say what answer Edward might have made, if Annabella had not come out of her closet at the moment, and had she not run up to him with the gentleness and lightness of a fairy, and placed her gentle hand on his lips, "Come with me, brother," said she, "come, dear Edward, I have a thousand things for you to do;" and drawing him with her, she led him first into her closet, and thence by another door into the gallery, and so out into the garden.

When Adolphus, Matilda, and Miss Philimot were left, they spent a little time in heartily abusing Edward, whom they called a low, vulgar boy. They next spoke of

Annabella. Miss Philimot said she was a remarkably plain child, but otherwise well enough ; Matilda called her a poor, harmless thing ; and Adolphus, merely to provoke his sister and Miss Philimot, reminded them that Lady Jane had not thought her exactly the ugly thing they said she was ; after which this agreeable brother and sister parted.

The family had arrived at Heron Hall about three in the afternoon ; dinner had been ordered at five ; after which Mr. Colinton and his son were rowed over the lake in a small boat, (kept there for such purposes,) to the heron's island. They had learned that this was about the time of the day in which there was as good a chance as any of seeing the birds. The breeding season was past ; but, as the game-keeper told his master, the same two which had remained there during the last winter were still about ; one of these being remarkable for having more white about it than is usual with birds of the kind.

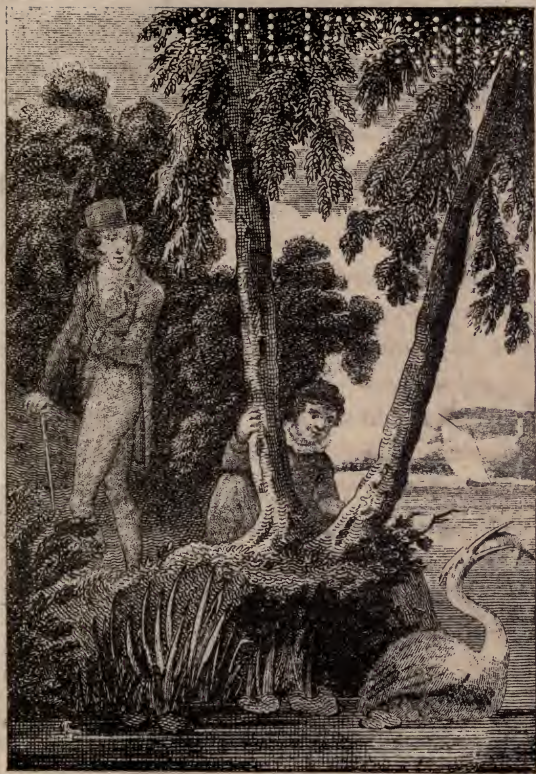
The little boat hove gently into a shady corner at the back of the island; and Mr. Collinton and his son crept softly through the bushes and low shrubs, to that point where the game-keeper had more than once seen the white heron standing in the water, ready to pounce on any unfortunate fish which might come within its reach.

Adolphus lost his cap in the scramble through the bushes. He was, however, fortunate in his object, creeping on his hands and knees to where a peculiar sound, as of something disturbing the water, attracted his attention. He half raised himself when near the edge of the bank, and peeping between the boles of two trees, he caught a very clear view of the white heron, just as she was in the act of swallowing a fish. His father was coming up after him; but he gave him a look to turn away and make no noise, and thus he actually had the pleasure of looking so long at the bird, that he could, as he thought, have distinguished it again from every other of its kind.

Mr. Collinton did not see the bird till it rose to fly away. He was, however, so much pleased with its appearance then, and altogether so anxious to protect the herons, and to keep up the ancient heronry, that he most strongly cautioned his son, on no account whatever to carry a gun in the direction of the island, nor to shoot, nor injure in any way any heron in or near his estates, nor to permit any other person who might be in his company so to do.

After the first day or two at Heron Hall, Annabella and Edward found that they were left to do pretty much as they chose. Miss Philimot had consented to permit Annabella to assist, as she called it, whenever she gave Matilda her lessons; but as Matilda seldom chose to take a lesson, her cousin found, that if she did not strive to improve herself, there would be an end of her education.

Mr. Collinton had engaged a learned gentleman in the neighbourhood to come and



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instruct his son for a few hours every morning, and Edward was for the present to take lessons with his cousin. The remainder of the day was all to himself, and he was by no means at a loss how to employ it. Whilst the fine weather lasted, he was always out of doors, and Annabella was with him whenever she could; and they must have been dull indeed, if they could not have amused themselves in such wide and delightful grounds as those of Heron Hall.

They were not required to be present at the family dinner when there were any visitors; and as there were few days without visitors, they had the liberty of absence six days out of the seven.

When these two orphans were together, it was very natural for them to speak of things which were gone and past; of their dear mamma and their native island; and of that indulgent father whom they never expected to see again; and one of their schemes of amusement was building a hut in a pine

grove in the park, into which few people ever came, and they called it a wigwam, and spent much time in and about it, till the weather got too cold to allow them any longer to fancy themselves still in dear Barbadoes.

In the meantime all the people of any consequence in the neighbourhood had called on Mr. and Mrs. Collinton, and they had returned their morning visits and accepted invitations to dinner; and as autumn advanced, these neighbours were invited again, and several grand entertainments given to them. Matilda and Miss Philimot had gone everywhere with Mrs. Collinton, and Matilda had been thought very elegant, and Miss Philimot the most accomplished, agreeable person in the world.

The Lady Jane Barclay, however, instead of being the first, was the last person to call upon Mrs. Collinton. She had been at the sea-side during the latter few months, and did not return till the beginning of October.

The very day after her arrival, however, she set out to make her visit to Heron Hall; and, as she always chose to do things in a way quite different from other people, she set out to walk, followed by a little foot-boy, who carried her cloak. She was a tall, thin woman, with bright eyes, and a very bright colour in her cheeks; and she had on the same gay bonnet which she had worn at the bathing-place, all tarnished as it was, and not improved by a few rolls upon the sands, when taken from her Ladyship's head, as it had been once or twice, by a sudden gust of wind.

It was Lady Jane's custom, when paying her morning visits on foot, always to take the shortest cut across the country, though this cut should lead her over a ploughed field or through a fold-yard. Her shortest way from her own house to Heron Hall was through Edward and Annabella's favourite fir-grove, and the two children were standing in the door-way of their wigwam, with

their heads dressed out with branches of pine, when the lady appeared, not five yards from them. She did not express any surprise at this strange sight, for she affected never to wonder at anything; but she called to Edward and his sister to stand just as they were, and not to move an inch.

“It cannot be better,” she said, as she came nearer and nearer; “what a sweet picture it would make; and you,” she added, looking at Edward, “are a fine, handsome, bold fellow; but not so much to my taste either, as that innocent looking thing, there, your sister, with her bright golden locks.

“Your names, of course, are Collinton; well, good bye, my pretty dears, we shall be better acquainted by and by; and she hurried on towards the Hall, and was admitted into an elegant morning-room, where Mrs. Collinton was sitting with Miss Philimot.

Lady Jane behaved with the same ease and singularity in this elegant room as she

had done in the fir-grove, and Mrs. Collinton thought her the most charming, delightful person that ever was, till she made a most terrible mistake. She had supposed that the boy and girl whom she had seen in the park were the son and daughter of the lady with whom she was speaking; and having told where she had seen them, she expressed her admiration, particularly of the little girl, in words which filled both the mother and the governess of Matilda with very bad feelings. Mrs. Collinton was obliged to explain who these children were, and Miss Philimot was so imprudent as to tell Matilda and Adolphus all that Lady Jane had said of their cousins. Thus from one thing to another envious and angry feelings grew and gained strength among these children. The only one amongst them to whom a better spirit was given being Annabella; and this young girl was enabled, through the Divine assistance, not only to fear the ill effects of jealous and angry pas-

sions in her own mind, but to endeavour to do all she could in counteracting them in the mind of her dear brother.

When it was become too cold for his sister to be much out of doors, Edward took up another amusement, and this was shooting small birds. He and Adolphus took up this taste about the same time ; and as Mr. Collinton was no sportsman, they went out with one or other of the game-keepers, and received instructions from them in the management of their fowling pieces, and in all things belonging to this kind of craft. Here, again, was a clashing of merits between the two cousins. Edward proved by far more skilful as a sportsman than Adolphus. His eye was more correct, and in spite of private interest, where the game-keeper paid Adolphus one compliment on his improvement, he paid Edward twenty. Nor did either of the boys behave well on these occasions ; for if one sulked the other triumphed, and there was no little Annabel present to place her

hand on her brother's lips, or to whisper in his ear—"Is this according to the gentle and forgiving spirit of our blessed Redeemer?"

Lady Jane had invited Mrs. Collinton to an elegant dinner, and Mrs. Collinton had returned the compliment. Two nieces of Lady Jane had come to see their aunt, and Matilda had thought both of them charming, and these young ladies were still at Barclay Cottage, as their aunt's house was called, when the following note was put into the hand of Mrs. Collinton. It was as follows:—

"I owe an entertainment to I know not how many of my good neighbours: as I know not how else to pay my debts in a summary way, I have thought of a ball and supper one day, and a little musical festival another, for I must not bring all my people together at one time.

"But I shall want a friend to take some of the burthen off me. I have thought of

you. You must come two days before my ball, and you must stay with me for a week. You are to bring your daughter and her harp, and your very agreeable Miss Philimot, and my sweet little favourite of the fir-grove, and your gentlemen may come and go as they please. This day fortnight is the day which I expect you."

Of course the invitation was accepted. Miss Philimot wrote the answer on pink paper in her lady's name, and then ran up to tell the joyful tidings to Matilda, and to consult upon dresses to be prepared. It happened that when Miss Philimot came up, Annabella was writing a letter to her godmother, Mrs. Storer, and it was a matter of course that she should tell her of the pleasure which was before her. It was not a week after this letter was gone, when a box came directed to her from London. It was brought straight up to the young lady's room; and although Annabella read her own name at full length in large characters on

the lid, she still could not believe that it was for her.

It was at length forced open. At the top was a letter from Mrs. Storer, in which that lady said, "that she had sent her dear little girl two dresses, in which to appear at Lady Jane's two evening entertainments, and a bonnet to wear, should she find it necessary to be much dressed any morning."

It cannot be disputed that the articles which the box contained were all more than necessary for the occasion of this visit to Lady Jane; but Mrs. Storer herself loved dress and fashion, and what she did she meant kindly.

Whilst Annabella was reading the letter, Miss Philimot had taken everything out of the box and spread it on the sofa. One of the dresses was of very fine muslin, trimmed with lace and white satin, the other was of sprigged net, made over pink satin. This was also beautifully trimmed; but the darling of all, as Miss Philimot said, was

the bonnet or hat, which was of purple velvet, with a magnificent heron's plume fixed on one side, a little plaited cap placed within, giving to the whole, as the same lady said, a most feminine and elegant air.

No one inquired what Annabella thought of all this magnificence ; but Miss Philimot saw in half an instant that Matilda was inexpressibly hurt and cut up at the sight of them. Her own dresses were ordered, and were expected to be ready in a few days ; but her mamma had not thought of getting her a new hat ; and how shocking dowdy she should look beside Annabella in her magnificent hat.

Of course Miss Philimot made no remark about the hat before Annabella, but, taking it up in her hand, she walked with it to Mrs. Collinton's dressing-room, and having explained what had happened, she said, " Miss Matilda should have a hat as nearly like this as may be." To this Mrs. Collinton agreed ; and it was then settled, that the governess

and her pupil should go, as soon as the carriage could be got ready, to the small town close by; that they should there consult the milliner, who was already busy with Matilda's dresses; and that, if possible, she should engage her to make a hat equal to that which had come from town. "The only difficulty I see," said Mrs. Collinton, "will be in the plume, but we must by all means have the plume."

Miss Matilda and Miss Philimot set out as soon as the coach drove to the door, and took with them, not only the hat, but the frocks, for the milliner to take the latest London fashions, and they came back in high spirits. They had chosen a very rich velvet, and a ribbon quite superior to that on the pattern hat; and the milliner had said that she had not the least doubt of being able to get a heron's plume.

At the end of four days from this time, two large baskets, something like magpies' cages, arrived from the milliner's, one

containing all Annabella's things, which had gone for patterns, and the other the new things for Matilda. Never was a better imitation than that of the hat; but, alas! instead of the heron's feathers, was a note of apologies. No such thing as a heron's plume was to be had in town for love or for gold.

When Matilda read the note, she tore it to pieces, and pushed away the hat, which Miss Philimot was holding before her eyes. She did not indeed shed tears, but she sate herself down in an arm-chair, and seemed determined not to regard a word that her governess said to her.

Mrs. Collinton had heard that the baskets were come from the milliner, and being scarcely less anxious than her daughter about the plume, she entered the room just at the moment in which Miss Philimot was laying down the hat which her ungracious pupil had pushed from her.

When Mrs. Collinton understood that there was no feather to be had, she expressed

herself almost as fretfully as her daughter had done, and was inquiring whether even yet it was too late to get one from London, when Annabella, who till that instant had not understood what was the cause of disturbance, came forward and begged that Matilda would wear her feather, telling her cousin what she really felt, that she did not care in the least whether there was one on her hat or not.

There is not room to repeat all the discussions which took place before it was settled whether Annabella's offer should be taken or not. Before dinner, however, Miss Philimot was seen, as she stood at the window of the dressing-room, carefully unfastening the plume from the bonnet which had come from London, and transferring it to the other; and all would have passed off without bad consequences, had not Edward unfortunately come into the same room to look for his sister, at the very instant that the removal of the feather from the London to the country

bonnet was complete. Annabella had told him the kindness of Mrs. Storer, and he had happened to meet Miss Philimot in the gallery, when she had been carrying his sister's hat to his aunt's dressing-room. He knew it again immediately, and as quickly guessed what the governess had been doing. To Miss Philimot he said, "You have been taking the feather from Annabella's cap to put into one of Miss Matilda's."

Miss Philimot turned round to look at him, but did not speak; and he repeated his words again, with no small violence. At the same instant Adolphus came into the room, stepping softly, and listening to what his cousin was saying.

Miss Philimot explained to him what was the cause of Edward's anger.

Adolphus took up the matter, and asked "if he was mean enough, after all the favours his mother and sister had shown Annabella, to grudge so trifling a favour as that of the loan of a feather?"

A feather indeed is a light thing, but it was no feather that really caused this discord between the cousins, though it was the occasion of the bursting out of the angry and jealous feelings which they had long entertained towards each other. From one angry word they went to another, and yet their quarrel did not come to its height either that day or for three or four days afterwards, although the boys continued to be very sullen to each other.

Edward in the meantime went out every morning with his gun, and thus the time went on till the day before that fixed for the ladies to go to Lady Jane's.

It was not long after noon on that day that Edward knocked at the door of Matilda's room. Being told to enter, he came forward, and presented his sister with a roll of coarse paper, which, being unfolded, showed a very fine heron's plume.

The feathers of this plume had the appearance as if they had not been long taken from

the bird. If dressed at all, it had not been done by a very skilful hand. Still they looked remarkably fine and glossy. Having made his present, Edward did not wait to hear what his sister would say ; but looking round with a bright and sparkling glance, he left the room with the air of a person who had done something vastly fine.

At the foot of the principal staircase was a room which Mr. Collinton devoted to business. As Edward came down these stairs, he saw the old gardener and the gamekeeper go into this room, and when they were in, the door was shut after them. He did not suppose that he should have any thing to do with what they had to say.

He passed through the hall, went out at the front door, and it was more than an hour before he returned to the house.

As he came into the hall, a servant man met him, and asked him to walk into the study, for this was the name given to the room at the bottom of the stairs.

When he arrived there he found his uncle standing with his back to the fire, his aunt sitting near, and his cousin Adolphus looking out of the window. Though Edward was far from being a timid boy, there was something so solemn in the manner of his relations, he stood quite still at the entrance of the room, his eye at the same time falling upon a few white feathers which lay upon a piece of brown paper upon the table.

"Come forward, Sir," said Mr. Collinton, "and answer me a few questions." Edward stepped towards the table, and there stood still again.

"Tell me, Sir," continued Mr. Collinton, "where you got that plume which the gardener saw this morning in your hand."

"I bought it, Sir," continued Edward.

"Of whom?" asked Mr. Collinton.

"I am not at liberty to tell," replied Edward.

"Not at liberty to tell!" exclaimed his aunt, and she shook her head.

"You have been shooting one of my herons, Sir," said Mr. Collinton, "in order that your sister might be decked with its plume ; and, let me tell you, Sir, that knowing as you do how anxious I am to preserve these birds, you could not possibly have done anything which could have annoyed me more."

"Are any of the herons missing ?" asked Edward, in some surprise.

"Your surprise is well affected," murmured Mrs. Collinton ; and Mr. Collinton said, "whether the information is wholly or only in part new to you, Edward, I now tell you, that the white heron has not now appeared for four days, although I knew it not till this morning. The gamekeeper has had his suspicions all along, but he did not hint to me even at the loss of the bird, till this morning."

"Well, Sir," said Edward, impatiently—

"Hear me out," replied Mr. Collinton, "and then you shall speak. On the morning

after the day, as far as I can find, on which you chose to take offence at the transfer of a plume from your sister's to my daughter's hat, you went out with your gun."

"I did so," said Edward; "I go out every morning."

"That same morning," continued Mr. Collinton, "the white heron was seen by the gamekeeper, and also by the gardener, flying from the island over the lake in a westerly direction. They watched the flight till the bird had disappeared, and at the same moment that they could see it no longer, they heard the report of a fowling-piece; and the heron has never since been seen."

"All this, Sir," said Edward, "proves nothing against me."

"Were you not sporting in that line of country, due west of the heron's island, that morning, and at a very early hour, Edward?" said Mr. Collinton.

"But I have not told you all that is known

of this affair. This morning, not four hours since, those feathers now lying on the table, sprinkled with blood as you now see them, were found lying on the ground in the place where the bird, if shot when and where the gamekeeper supposes it was, must have lighted on the earth."

"And the old man," cried Edward fearlessly, "really charges me with the shot. Does he not know that there are not two more men beside himself in the whole country who could at his own pleasure bring down a heron on the wing."

"That which might not be easily done by the best marksman, might be accidentally performed by a very indifferent one," said Mr. Collinton; "and you, Edward, are, they tell me, not an indifferent one."

Instead of answering his uncle, or even trying to clear himself, Edward turned towards Adolphus, and said bitterly, "I should like to know who could have been mean enough to have searched for those feathers,

in order to bring them as witnesses against an innocent person."

At the sound of his cousin's voice, Adolphus had turned, being as much offended at the suspicion conveyed in Edward's words, as Edward was at the charge brought against himself of shooting the heron. The eyes of the two youths met, and had they been flint and steel, they would have emitted flames. The supposed depravity and hardness of Edward really hurt his uncle so much, that he was unable to add another word; he threw himself in a chair, and for a moment covered his face.

Mrs. Collinton, however, who had no such tender feelings, took up the case, and continued to irritate him more by many additional reproofs which she gave him, on the supposition of his having really killed the heron, which he continued to deny; and, when she had almost worked him up to fury, she dismissed him from her presence.

Edward had run into the park, there to

give way alone to his bitter feelings, and there Adolphus followed him. So violent was the passion of each of them, that neither of them could have told exactly what was said or done. Edward began with charging Adolphus with making up the story of the heron against him, with no truth whatever. Adolphus told him that he had not made the story up. Violent and offensive words, and even blows, passed between the angry boys, and there was no one to sooth either party. Adolphus at length, being more than half ashamed of himself, returned to the Hall to dress for dinner; whilst Edward, who was already deeply sensible of his own violent conduct, walked farther into the grove, and did not return to the Hall till it was quite dark.

In the meantime Annabella knew nothing either of the charge brought against her brother, or of the quarrel between the boys, and in that happy ignorance she remained till the next morning; for it was so common

for Edward to go to bed as soon as he came in from his shooting excursions, that she thought nothing of his not appearing in the drawing-room at tea.

In the morning, however, a note was brought to her, scrawled very roughly by her brother, and blistered in many places by tears. This letter was merely to bid her adieu; to say that he had been violent and proud, and had behaved very ill and ungratefully to his uncle; and that if Adolphus had been unkind to him, he had paid him to the full in his own coin; but that he had not shot or otherwise ill-used the heron.

When Annabella inquired what this note meant, she heard that her brother was missing; that he had taken only a change of linen with him; and that he had not even slept that night in his room.

The disappearance of Edward threw a great depression over several persons in the family. Adolphus was greatly shocked and vexed with himself. He had not actually

made up the tale against Edward, but he had done nearly as bad, he had strengthened his father's suspicions, and worked up his mother's anger; and he could not hide it from himself, that he had followed Edward to the park, and that Edward had not followed him.

When any one is humbled by feeling that he has behaved ill, it is a certain sign that a Divine Spirit is working in his mind; and it is very certain that what had happened with regard to poor Edward, continued to press very heavily on the minds of Mr. Colinton and his son. As to poor Annabella, she wept till she made herself quite ill; and there were only three persons in the family who went after all to Lady Jane's entertainment.

Months passed away at Heron Hall without any events; Edward was not heard of; the white heron did not appear again; and poor Annabella lost all the bright bloom of her cheeks; and although grace was given

to her still to be patient and gentle, yet it was seldom, very seldom, that she ever smiled.

It was not till the winter, and even the colder weeks of spring were over, that the whole story of the heron's plume, the loss of the white heron, and the real cause of Edward's disappearance, which accounted for the melancholy of her favourite Annabella, reached the ears of Lady Jane.

The story came through the servants, and when the butler told the story to his lady, he begged her not to speak of it, which she promised. But she did not promise not to act upon it: for that very morning she set out on foot for Heron Hall, and there insisted upon it, in her usual singular way, that Annabella should go back with her to her cottage, and stay with her till the roses bloomed again in her cheeks. Poor Annabella was pleased with change, and felt that she could be happier with Lady Jane than with Matilda and Miss Philimot.

Soon after Lady Jane had taken Annabella away, Mr. Collinton and his family removed for a few weeks from Heron Hall to Margate, where they took handsome lodgings, and had the opportunity of showing much of their grandeur before some of their old city friends.

Miss Philimot had a brother, a smart young man, who was studying the law in London, and as it was holiday time, he came down to Margate, and was very much with the family whilst they remained there, and even after they removed to Ramsgate, which they did when tired of the first place.

The visit of Mr. Collinton and his family to these places, happened to be the very year in which steam-boats were first used in the sea in a regular way; and they were then so new, that many persons used to walk down to the pier at the hour when they might be expected.

This was a very favourite lounge of Matilda and Miss Philimot; but neither Mr.

Collinton nor Adolphus liked it. Miss Philimot, therefore, often engaged her brother to go with them; and it was at one of these times that they met with the adventure represented in the second picture.

The expected steamer was approaching the pier, though still at some distance, and there were several sailors, porters, lightermen, and persons of that kind, busy on the pier with bales and packages, which seemed either to have been lately brought from aboard some boat, or ready to be stowed in some other.

The only person about the pier not employed in this way, was a young gentleman, neatly dressed something in the style of a sailor, though not entirely so; and when first seen, his back was turned to Mr. Philimot and the ladies, and he was looking most intently and anxiously towards the steamer.

Some little argument having arisen between Miss Philimot and her brother respecting

the name of the steamer, and other matters belonging to her, such as when she would leave Ramsgate again, Mr. Philimot called to this young gentleman, "Sir, I beg your pardon, but perhaps you can tell me what I wish to know?" The youth immediately turned, and answered very civilly, that he was ready to reply to any questions in his power.

"What do you call that vessel, there, Sir?" said Mr. Philimot. At the moment in which the youth raised his arm to point to the steamer, Miss Philimot had her head turned round to look at some object nearly behind them, and Matilda's eyes were fixed on the steamer; but, at the voice of the youth she started, looked at his face, and instantly knew her cousin. Edward knew her at the same moment,—a deep glow rose in his cheeks,—he turned suddenly round, sprang upon the pier, and from thence to a flight of steps which led down on the beach, and disappeared so instantly,

that it was impossible for any one to say which way he went.

Miss Philimot, who had not seen the face of the youth, endeavoured to persuade Matilda that she was mistaken in the person ; but Matilda was certain that she had seen Edward, and his very running away proved that it was him ; for why should a stranger have thus fled at the sight of her ? Mr. Philimot thought that Matilda was right, and undertook to try to find out whither the boy had fled ; but neither did he, nor Adolphus, nor Mr. Collinton succeed in tracing the boy, although they made every inquiry. Whilst they remained at Ramsgate no Edward was to be heard of, and they returned to Heron Hall as much in the dark respecting him as ever they had been.

When the family got back into Devonshire, Lady Jane brought Annabella home. The young girl looked much better in health. She had been kindly treated, and Lady Jane would not have parted with her then, had

she not received a sudden call to join an old relation, who was dangerously ill at a bathing place not very distant.

Annabella now found herself again in that little room where once she had been very happy, and where many things reminded her of her dear, dear brother. The year had gone nearly round since she had first come to Heron Hall; and she could sit again with the window open, and look upon the lawns and groves of the park, and hear the cawing of the rooks; all which sights and sounds reminded her of her native island, and the days of her happy childhood.

Lady Jane had given her many delightful books, and other useful presents; but books could not make up for the loss of her brother. She wanted a companion, and although Matilda was less unkind to her than she once had been, yet she never talked to her, nor answered her when she happened to make a remark. There was, however, a great change in the manner of her uncle

to her, and a still greater change in that of Adolphus.

It had pleased God to give this boy, lately so proud and disagreeable, such a strong sense of the evil he had committed, not only in despising his orphan cousins, but in working up Edward's temper so as to make him run away from home, that he became quite a changed person.

No one, not even a child, can be made to believe that he is wicked, excepting through the power of God the Spirit entering his heart, and giving him a new nature; and there is no other way of accounting for the different behaviour of Adolphus to every body about him, than by supposing that this new nature had been given to him. Some months before he had been impatient to his father and mother, haughty to the servants, and hard-hearted to poor people. He had never taken any notice of Annabella, and had been cross to Matilda, and had always mocked and laughed at Miss Philimot; but

now he was become polite to every body, and tried hard to get his sister to love him. There was nothing, however, which made him so unhappy, as seeing Annabella walking alone about the gardens. "A year ago," he used to say to himself, "she had a dear brother to play with;" and then he remembered the hut which that brother had made for her in the pine-grove. I will put that hut in order, he thought, and take Annabella to it, and ask her if she will let me be the same to her as Edward was. We are getting too old to play like little children, but if she will come there and carry her work there, I will bring a book and read to her, or I will do anything to make up the loss of Edward.

As soon as Adolphus had thought of this plan, he took a workman with him to the pine-grove, and soon got the hut repaired. He had benches made in it, and a rude table put in the midst of it; and then he came one morning and invited Annabella to walk

with him. When he brought her near to the pine-grove the tears came into her eyes; but when she saw the wigwam in such fine order, she began to weep so much, that Adolphus was almost sorry he had brought her there.

The bitterness of her grief, however, soon became less, when he told her why he had brought her there, and how much he wished to be like a brother to her, and how he hated himself for his unkindness to Edward. From that day Annabella became like a very dear young sister to him; and they spent many hours together in reading, working, or drawing in that quiet place; and in this way July ended and August came, and at the same time came a letter from Lady Jane, dated from a genteel small bathing place, not thirty miles from Heron Hall.

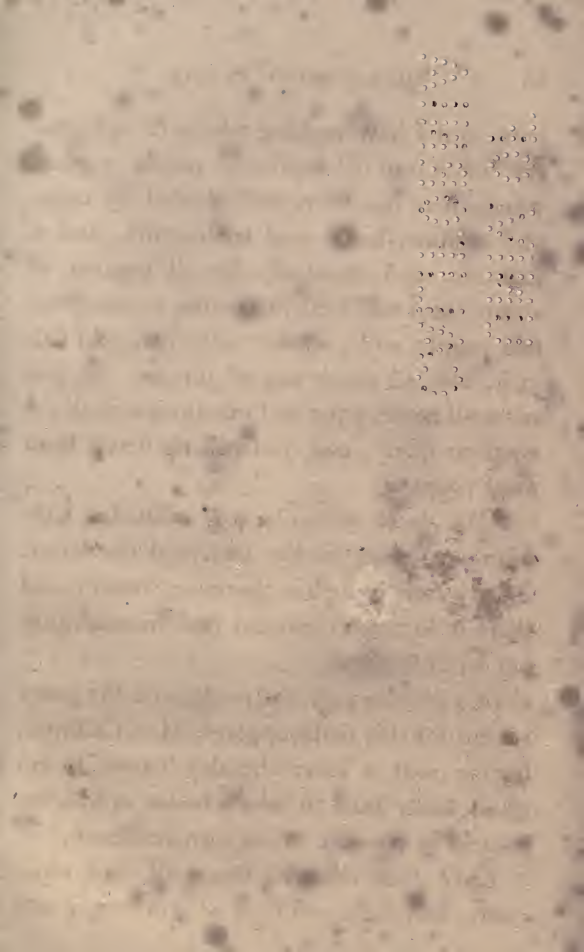
“Here I am,” she said, in her usual odd way, “with my old relation, who is getting better, though she is uncommonly dull and tiresome. There are no pleasant people

here, and I have nothing whatever to amuse me but a fine old-fashioned public garden, where there is a short walk shaded by trees, and summer-house and trellis-work, and a fountain, and an aviary for all manner of strange and odd birds, to amuse strange and odd people, and a square tank with gold fish in it, and all those sort of things. So you must all come, papa and mamma, and all ; I want company, and you will do better than most people."

"We must certainly go," said Mrs. Collinton, as soon as she had read the letter. "Lady Jane is such a charming woman, and there is so much ease and real friendship in her letter."

In a few days all was ready, and the party set out for this bathing-place, Mrs. Collinton having sent a letter the day before, to request Lady Jane to take a house or lodging as near as possible to her own residence.

Lady Jane received them all, but especially Annabella, with great kindness ; and





the young people were pleased to find that their apartments commanded a very fine view of the sea.

They had a bright day for their journey from Heron Hall; but as they were sitting at tea in the evening, Mr. Collinton remarked an appearance in the sea and sky which he thought threatened a stormy night.

"Oh, I hope not!" cried Annabella, "I should be very unhappy, indeed, if there was a storm."

"Really," said Matilda, "as no sea, I suppose, could ever reach us here, I do not know anything I should enjoy more than to see a fine storm from these windows, and all the ships tossed about."

"You forget yourself, Matilda," said Mr. Collinton, gravely, and he began hastily to talk of other things.

"See, see," cried Adolphus, a few minutes afterwards, "what is that speck in the water, far, far away—can it be a ship?" Mr. Collinton had brought a glass with him; he

soon put it in order, and after he had looked a moment through it, he said that the speck was a ship, and he thought a large one.

Adolphus next looked, and kept crying out, "It gets larger every minute, and it is coming right down upon the beach below; I think the captain foresees a storm, and wants to get under the shelter of the cliff. Don't you call that piece of high-land, which runs out to our left, a cliff, papa?"

"I hope, oh! I do hope, cried Annabella, that the ship will get in safe before the storm comes."

The whole family sat watching the vessel till the sun set, and darkness was closing in fast; after a while they could not distinguish what progress she made; and however fast she came, the threatenings of a storm kept time with her. The sun had set amongst angry, dark-red clouds, and there was a low, whistling sound in the wind, which foreboded no good.

Before the family went to their rooms, the

whole face of the sea before them was quite black, and the wind was so loud, that had the vessel fired guns, they could not have been heard by the anxious children. In this uncomfortable state poor Annabella went to bed ; but it was long, long before she slept, and when she did sleep, she dreamed of all sorts of shipwrecks and sorrows.

The first sound Annabella heard in the morning, was a rap at her door, and the voice of Adolphus, saying, "The storm is over, the sun shining bright, and the ship safe under the shore ; so get up, cousin."

Annabella did get up in great haste. Adolphus showed her the ship lying quietly within the shade of the high-land, and pointed out to her that she was a large vessel, and probably had come a long voyage ; but she lay as far perhaps as two miles from the town, near the beach. Just below was a small steam-packet, which Adolphus said had come in the evening before, and would soon go off again.

Lady Jane called soon after the family had breakfasted, to take them to see her famous garden. They were all soon ready, and set out in three companies; that is, Lady Jane walked with Mr. Collinton, Mrs. Collinton took Miss Philimot's arm, and Adolphus went with his sister and cousin. When arrived in the garden, the three parties separated, and took different alleys. As Mrs. Collinton went up one walk with the governess, she met a lady whom she fancied she had seen before; but being busy in conversation, she did not give her a second thought. This lady was Mrs. Storer. She had arrived the morning before in the steam-packet. She knew Mrs. Collinton again in an instant, but she had her reasons for passing on without seeming to notice her. She went out of the garden as soon as she had passed.

There was nothing in the garden which the young people were so anxious to see as the aviary. Lady Jane had told them in

in what direction to look for it, and they went straight towards it.

This aviary was a handsome stone building, divided into large compartments for the different sorts of birds, as may be seen in the picture. As they walked towards it, they saw a youth standing looking at the birds with his back to them, and with this youth a man, who looked like a gardener; before they could come up the youth had gone away, but the man stood still. This person was the gardener, and it was his business to show off the birds, and so well had some of these been trained, that the beautiful turtle-doves, in one cage, did not refuse to pick some sugar plums from Matilda's hands.

When the young people had amused themselves awhile with these and a parrot, which chattered, and scolded, and shrieked in a most surprising manner, the gardener invited Adolphus to walk round the building, telling him he had other curious birds in the back of it, though none, perhaps, that would

please the ladies so well as the parrots. Adolphus accepted the invitation, and saw in a yard behind the house various large birds, some in vast cages, and others fastened by the leg in the open air ; but to none of these could the boy pay the least attention, for he had hardly entered into the yard before his eye was attracted by a heron ; and one, too, exactly like that which Edward had seen.

“ Where did you get that bird ? ” cried Adolphus, in his amazement. “ I bought it ; ” replied the man, shortly. “ I know it,” said Adolphus ; “ and the very place from whence it came ; and if you would sell it, you shall have a high price.”

“ Wait a bit,” returned the man ; “ if it is to be sold it will not be to you ; it is bid for already, and the refusal promised. There was a young gentleman here, not half an hour since, who claimed its acquaintance also, and offered me all he had in the world if I would sell it.”

“A young gentleman,” cried Adolphus, “where is he? where can I find him?” and he ran round the house to his sister and cousin, crying, “He is found? I have found him; and now I can beg his pardon, and we can make it up, and we shall be happy again.” “Found him! found whom?” asked Matilda. “Edward—dear Edward,” replied Adolphus, “but I do not know where he is.” “Absurd!” said Matilda, pursing up her lip; “you have found him, but you do not know where he is: how ridiculous!” Before her brother could answer, Miss Philimot’s voice was heard calling, as from a little distance, “Miss Matilda! Miss Annabella! Master Adolphus! you must run to your papa, he wants you all; take the straight walk to the arbour.”

“They have found him; I am sure they have found him,” cried Adolphus; and away he flew down under the trees, followed by Annabella, whilst Matilda took Miss Philimot’s arm, and affecting to be quite hurried and nervous, she asked what all this bustle could mean?

“ I hardly know myself,” said Miss Philimot ; “ but so far I understand, Mrs. Storer came to this place yesterday in the steam-packet, and with her came master Edward ; how long he may have been with her I know not, for I heard something of his running off to sea after he had killed the heron ; however, not half an hour ago, the rude boy was running, as for his life, down the great walk, when he almost tumbled against Lady Jane and your father ; and I and your mamma saw Mr. Collinton from a little distance take the youth in his arms and embrace him as if he had been his own son ; but this, my dear Miss Matilda, is not the most wonderful part of the story I have to tell you. Who do you think was on board that vessel which we saw last night ? ”

“ Surely not my uncle ! ” cried Matilda.
“ The very same,” replied Miss Philimot ;
“ and at the very instant that your too kind papa was taking Edward to his heart in the way I have described, Captain Collinton

himself appeared in the garden and Mrs. Storer with him. I suppose that he had come on shore to look about him and had met Mrs. Storer, and she had brought him to the garden to seek his son; and then, my dear Miss Matilda, there was such another unceremonious greeting as had happened just before." "And Lady Jane present," cried Matilda, "to see it; oh! how vulgar she must think us, so used as she is to genteel life."

"Indeed," said Miss Philimot, "I am not quite convinced that Lady Jane is quite so high bred and elegant as we have thought for; not one person present seemed more rejoiced than she was at these meetings; and, indeed, it was Lady Jane who hurried me to look for you."

Not even the coldness of Mrs. Collinton, the pride of Matilda, or the affectation of Miss Philimot, could destroy the happiness of these unlooked-for re-unions. Captain Collinton was returned to go from home no

more; his voyage had been fortunate, and he had money enough to live quietly with his children.

It was necessary for him to leave the bathing-place the next morning, and to go round with his ship to London; but the restored friends had a most delightful evening together, and Lady Jane was so much pleased with Mrs. Storer, that she wished her to pay a long visit at her cottage.

A month after that they all met again at Heron Hall, near to which, and close to one of the park gates a small house had been found, which was soon made, with a little of Lady Jane's taste, to suit the Captain; and when they were all puzzling for a name to the cottage, Archibald begged it might be called the Wigwam, and Lady Jane said nothing could be better. The white heron had been purchased at a high price from the man who kept the aviary, and on the day when every one met again at Heron Hall, the door of the cage in which the

captive had been brought back was opened, and as soon as the creature had stepped out and stretched her wings, she soared aloft till she looked like a mere speck in the air, and soon again began to descend, alighting right upon the loftiest tree of her native island.

Edward never told that it was the young gamekeeper who had given him the heron's plume, nor was it ever known who caught and sold the white heron.

THE HOG AND OTHER ANIMALS.

A FABLE.

A DEBATE once arose among the animals in a farm-yard, which of them was most valued by their common master. After the horse, the ox, the cow, the sheep, and the dog, had stated their several pretensions, the hog took up the discourse.

“It is plain,” said he, “that the greatest value must be set upon that animal which is kept most for his own sake, without expecting from him any return of use or service. Now which of you can boast so much in that respect as I can?”

“As for you, Horse, though you are very well fed and lodged, and have servants to attend upon you and make you sleek and clean, yet all this is for the sake of your labour. Do I not see you taken out early every morning, put in chains, or fastened to the shafts of a heavy cart, and not brought back till noon; when, after a short respite, you are taken to work again till late in the evening? I may say just the same to the Ox, except that he works for poorer fare.

“For you, Mrs. Cow, who are so dainty over your chopped straw and grains, you are thought worth keeping only for your milk, which is drained from you twice a-day to the last drop, while your poor young ones are taken from you, and sent I know not whither.

“You, poor innocent Sheep, who are turned out to shift for yourselves upon the bare hills, or penned upon the fallows with now and then a withered turnip or some musty hay, you pay dearly enough for your keep by

resigning your warm coat every year, for want of which you are liable to be starved to death on some of the cold nights before summer.

“As for the Dog, who prides himself so much on being admitted to our master’s table, and made his companion, that he will scarce condescend to reckon himself one of us, he is obliged to do all the offices of a domestic servant by day, and to keep watch during the night, while we are quietly asleep.

“In short, you are all of you creatures maintained for use—poor subservient things, made to be enslaved or pillaged. I, on the contrary, have a warm sty and plenty of provisions all at free cost. I have nothing to do but grow fat and follow my amusement: and my master is best pleased when he sees me lying at ease in the sun, or filling my belly.”

Thus argued the Hog, and put the rest to silence by so much logic and rhetoric. This

was not long before the winter set in. It proved a very scarce season for fodder of all kinds; so that the farmer began to consider how he was to maintain all his live stock till spring. "It will be impossible for me," thought he, "to keep them all; I must therefore part with those I can best spare. As for my horses and working oxen, I shall have business enough to employ them; they must be kept, cost what it will. My cows will not give me much milk in the winter, but they will calve in the spring, and be ready for the new grass: I must not lose the profit of my dairy. The sheep, poor things, will take care of themselves, as long as there is a bite upon the hills: and if the deep snow comes, we must do with them as well as we can by the help of a few turnips and some hay, for I must have their wool at shearing time to make out my rent with. But my hogs will eat me out of house and home, without doing me any good. They must go to pot,

that's certain; and the sooner I get rid of the fat ones, the better."

So saying, he singled out the orator as one of the prime among them, and sent him to the butcher the very next day.



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